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Report of the twenty-eighth series of Joint Meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination, held on 27 October 1994

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held the twenty-eighth series of Joint Meetings at United Nations Headquarters on 27 October 1994 under the chairmanship of Mrs. Agnès Aggrey-Orleans (Ghana), Chairman of CPC.

2. The provisional agenda for the Joint Meetings (E/1994/122) was adopted; it contained the following item: "African economic recovery and development".

3. The Joint Meetings had before them a background paper (E/1994/123), prepared by the United Nations, which drew the attention of the Joint Meetings to the continuing crisis of development in Africa which provided an opportunity for a dialogue between the intergovernmental and inter-agency secretariat levels on forging a coordinated and effective response to that crisis.

4. In her opening statement, the Chairman recalled the critical economic and social situation facing Africa since the early 1980s, the result of which was an increase in absolute poverty, projected to reach 304 million people by the end of the century.

5. The Chairman drew attention to the fact that CPC had considered the revision to the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development during the second part of its thirty-fourth session. 1/ She pointed out that, as part of United Nations efforts to address the situation, CPC and ACC had held separate discussions on Africa. Both Committees had placed the highest priority on African development, and had emphasized the need for enhanced coordination and increased financial resources to implement the revised System-wide Plan of Action effectively.

6. The Chairman invited participants in the Joint Meetings to carry out their discussions with candour and honesty, in particular on the problems of coordination and the allocation of resources to fund the System-wide Plan of Action.

7. The Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development said that the organizing principle of the United Nations system's support for economic recovery and development was the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. 2/ The objectives and priorities had been defined in the revised System-wide Plan of Action endorsed by CPC. ACC, in turn, had devoted considerable attention to Africa at its second regular session of 1994, and its conclusions and recommendations were before the Joint Meetings. 3/ The challenge facing the United Nations system was to define and implement specific programmes and projects in support of African recovery. In that regard, he stressed that the scale of the present efforts of the United Nations system and the international community in general, in no way matched the scale of the problems faced in Africa. A much higher level of commitment and resources at the national and international levels was required to overcome the African crisis.

8. Calling for a genuine dialogue between the partners of African development, the Under-Secretary-General invited the participants in the Joint Meetings to pay particular attention to resource mobilization, including increased official development assistance (ODA), as well as to debt, foreign direct investment and the establishment of a diversification facility for Africa's commodities.

9. Statements were made during the Joint Meetings by the representatives of Egypt, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, China, the United Nations Development Programme, Togo, the United Nations Population Fund, Ukraine, the Economic Commission for Africa, Germany (on behalf of the European Union), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Canada, the World Health Organization, Romania, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Indonesia, the United Nations Children's Fund, Brazil, the International Labour Organization, Zambia, the World Meteorological Organization, the United States of America, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, Congo, the United Nations Drug Control Programme, Japan, the World Bank, Senegal, the International Monetary Fund and the Netherlands.

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

10. The Joint Meetings decided that the results of the Meetings should be presented in the form of a Chairman's summary, which is reproduced below.

> The Joint Meetings held a full debate, during which the critical situation of Africa was reviewed. Both the members of CPC and the representatives of the organizations of the United Nations system participated actively in the discussion. They presented their views in a spirit of openness and held a frank exchange of views and dialogue.
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> The comprehensive background paper submitted to the Joint Meetings (E/1994/123), as well as the opening statement by the Chairman and the introductory remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, were welcomed.
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> In their statements, members of CPC addressed a number of policy issues related to African economic recovery and development, and raised questions about the critical issues of resource mobilization and allocation, inter-agency coordination, particularly at the country and regional levels, and the need to build partnerships between the regional organizations and the United Nations system, as well as between the Bretton Woods institutions and other organizations of the system.
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> Representatives of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in their statements, addressed many of the issues raised by members of CPC, and briefed the Joint Meetings on the policies and strategies being pursued by their organizations in support of African development in their respective fields of competence and on the steps being taken by them to enhance inter-agency coordination and build partnerships with multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations,

the private sector and other development actors in support of African development.

Conclusions

The following broad conclusions were derived from the discussion:

(a) The Joint Meetings welcomed the conclusions and recommendations relating to the revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, adopted by CPC at its thirty-fourth session (E/1994/123, para. 88), and the conclusions of ACC, adopted at its second regular session of 1994 (E/1994/123, para. 90);

(b) The Joint Meetings called upon the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to take all steps necessary for the effective implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action, in close cooperation with African Governments and the regional organizations concerned, taking into account the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and ACC;

(c) The Joint Meetings shared the deep concern expressed by ACC at the decline of official development assistance, and called for urgent measures to increase ODA flows to Africa. It was generally agreed that a much higher level of commitment and resources, at both the national and international levels, would be required to overcome the African crisis. It was emphasized that an adequate level of resources should be allocated for the effective implementation of the revised System-wide Plan of Action by the organizations of the United Nations system;

(d) It was recognized that a substantial reduction in the burden of external debt was essential to enable the African countries to restore sustained growth and development. International assistance was also needed to enable African countries to benefit fully from the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and to minimize their short-term negative effects;

(e) The importance of diversification was stressed, as was the need for international support for the efforts of African countries to diversify their economies, including through greater market access; the need for a diversification facility was also stressed;

(f) It was considered that good governance, including accountability and transparency, a sound and stable macroeconomic policy framework, consistent and effective policies for reform and structural adjustment, taking into account the social dimension, creation of favourable conditions for market-oriented development and foreign direct investment were equally critical to success;

(g) The need to achieve essential food security and develop the food and agricultural sector was emphasized. It was essential to overcome structural constraints inherent in current agricultural practices, to

improve water resources management, to increase the irrigation of arable land and to apply scientific techniques to agricultural production;

(h) It was noted that industrialization, which was essential for diversifying the production base and generating employment opportunities, especially for a rapidly growing urban population, required the adoption of measures to create an environment conducive to private investment;

(i) The importance of reversing environmental degradation and addressing its negative implications for long-term development was stressed; a call was made for improving and enhancing national capacities for the environmentally sound management of the natural resource base;

(j) It was noted that building human settlements and a modern system of transport and communications, which were equally critical to overcoming logistical obstacles to development, called for regional approaches and long-term investments;

(k) The development of human resources and capacity-building was considered central to success in all areas of action. It required a focus on adequate nutrition; a comprehensive health policy and strategy, including the control of widespread diseases; education for all and the building of middle- and higher-level skills and institutional capacity; and the creation of employment opportunities. The tide of rapid population growth must be arrested by development strategies and family planning approaches that aimed at raising the status of women in society;

(l) A unanimous call was made for enhanced and effective coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly at the field level, to ensure efficient delivery and optimum impact of programmes and projects. A call was made to fully utilize such instruments of coordination as the resident coordinator system, the country strategy note, the programme approach, national execution and field committees. It was suggested that cooperation and partnership with such regional organizations as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) should be strengthened; in this context, the coordinating role of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at the regional level was stressed. It was suggested that regular meetings of resident coordinators with ECA and OAU could enhance field-level coordination;

(m) The Joint Meetings emphasized the need to improve the image and highlight the successes that had been achieved in Africa.

Notes

1/ For the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on the question, see E/1994/123, para. 88.

2/ General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

3/ See E/1994/123, paras. 89 and 90.